

Vegan Freak Interview with Gary Francione – Part 1 (June 20, 2008)

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Bob Torres: It is our great pleasure to be here again with Gary L. Francione on Vegan Freak radio. Gary's been with us many times in the past. When we ask our listeners, "What do you want back on the show?", many of you say, "Gary." So here we are with Gary.

You should know who Gary is. But in case you don't know, Gary L. Francione was the first academic to teach animal rights theory in an American law school. And he has lectured on the topic throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe. He is Distinguished Professor of Law and Nicholas deB. Katzenbach Scholar of Law and Philosophy at Rutgers University, Newark. His books include, *Introduction to Animal Rights* and *Animals, Property, and the Law*.

Gary is joining us today to talk about his new book which is just a brilliant volume actually. I think it's a really nice capstone to his thoughts. But I hope it's not a capstone – I hope there's more after this. His new book is called, *Animals as Persons: Essays on the Abolition of Animal Exploitation*.

Welcome to Vegan Freak Radio, Gary.

Gary Francione: Hi, Bob. Hi, Jenna. It's great to be back. And let me allay your fears: I'm actually working on another book and was working on it right before you called.

Jenna Torres: That's good to hear.

Bob: You are a workaholic.

Gary: Yes, well, a man with a mission.

Bob: Indeed. Maybe we could begin by having you tell us a bit about where this book is going, giving us a little summary for people who aren't familiar with it yet.

Gary: Well, it's a series of seven essays. Five of them are recent essays, two are older essays. And they deal with issues like this, for example. I took a look at animal welfare development over the past dozen years or so since I wrote, *Animals, Property, and the Law* and *Rain Without Thunder*. I looked at animal welfare legislation to see if anything had changed, to see if animals were indeed getting more protection. Because when I wrote, *Animals, Property, and the Law* and *Rain Without Thunder*, which I did in 1995 and '96 respectively, people who disagreed with me said, "Well, yes, we agree that there's a problem with animals being property, but that doesn't mean we can't give them significant protection. We just have to do better, and we have to give them more protection. But the very fact that they're property doesn't mean that we can't give them more protection."

Now, of course, I never said we *can't* give them more protection. What I said was, because animals are economic commodities, it's difficult to give them more protection. To give animals protection (or more protection), you have to *purchase* more protection. And doing so adds to the cost of production of animal products. If people aren't willing to bear that cost, and if it's going to result in demand changing and in revenues being lost, then producers aren't going to be interested in it. And consumers aren't going to be interested if they're going to have to pay more money. There will always be some people who will pay more – affluent people, who will pay more – so that they can ease their consciences and feel that they're eating “happy meat” or whatever. But, by and large, most people aren't really going to be willing to do that.

But what I did was I took a look at the past dozen years or so since I wrote those books to examine the legislation and the industry changes that had happened. I wanted to see whether they fit my paradigm or *didn't* fit my paradigm. And what I conclude in one of the longer essays is that it *does* fit the paradigm. Everything that's happened actually fits exactly what I was saying in '95 and '96. And that is this: animal welfare reform is very, very limited, does not provide much protection, and it's limited by efficient exploitation – that is, we protect animal interests only to the extent that it's economically beneficial for us to do so. And that's basically the limiting principle of animal welfare. It's not the *necessarily* limiting principle, but it is *in practice*, because of the status of animals as economic commodities: it is the principle which matters on the ground, it's the practical principle that does limit this stuff. And so, I analyzed that in the book.

I also explored the development of animal welfare theory in a couple of the essays, and by that what I mean is: in the 19th century, when animal welfare theory developed first in Britain and then in the United States, it was based on the idea that, “Well, yes, we've been wrong to exclude animals from the moral community, because animals can suffer. So, therefore, they have to matter morally”. But we have to remember something. And that is that Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill and those people who were sort of the founders of the animal welfare movement – or the whole idea of animal welfare – and the people who promoted it legally.

The fact that they thought that animals suffered and therefore mattered morally and that they should receive legal protection didn't mean that they thought that non-humans and humans were the same. Bentham and Mill thought that there were very significant differences between humans and non-humans and they did not think that animal life had the same moral value as human life, which led both of them and basically the entire animal welfare movement to the conclusion that it was okay *that* we used animals, the problem was *how* we used animals. And so the welfare movement was founded on the idea that animals had less moral value; their suffering mattered but their lives didn't.

Bob: mmhmm.

Gary: So animal life had less moral value than human life. It was alright for us to use animals as long as we treated them well because their lives didn't matter. They didn't have the same sorts of minds that we had, they didn't care about whether we killed them; they just cared about how we killed them and how we used them while they were alive. And so I got into that and sort of discussed the historical developments of welfare theory and what I wanted to do and what I did

in a couple of essays in the book was sort of show how that's linked with contemporary welfare theory.

It's that sort of thinking that leads people like Singer to say, "Well, animals don't have a life, they can't grasp that they have a life in the same way that we do." And Singer actually says in 'Animal Liberation' that animals can suffer and the fact that animals can suffer, that animals suffering shouldn't be discounted simply because of species. But because animals are not, according to Singer, self-aware or because they don't have the same sorts of minds that humans have, it's those cognitive differences that matter to the value of life. And it's what leads Singer to say that, "We can be conscientious omnivores as long as we are careful to make sure that we eat animals that have a relatively pleasant life and a relatively painless death," and things like that.

Bob: Well, that's not surprising, right, because you've said in the past that, that Singer is Bentham's modern proponent.

Gary: Well, yeah, I mean, one of the reasons why I got into this issue was, when I wrote "Introduction to Animal Rights" in 2000, I had that chapter in which I talk about Bentham and Singer and I talk about the similarities and how where I think both of them went wrong. I got a really tremendous reaction from that in terms of both people being very interested and also people coming back and saying – the welfare movement which is very much sort of a cult around Singer – very, very upset in saying, "How can you say that Singer doesn't care? That he doesn't think that killing animals raises a moral issue?" And, and so I wanted to explore that further which I do in a couple of the essays in this book and I think it's very clear and I know understand, better than I ever have, really, where Singer's coming from; both in terms of his contemporary thinking, but also historically where those ideas came from, and the fact that you have people like Mill and Bentham saying, "Animals have different minds and because they have different minds, it's okay that we use them, we just have to be kind to them when we use them." Which is really the philosophical foundation of the welfare movement.

So I get into that. One of the essays deals with ecofeminism and the notion that the ethic of care, the feminist ethic of care goes beyond animal rights, which I dispute and say "no it doesn't." That the ethic of care is, in essence, what I argue in this particular essay, is a consequentialist theory, very, very similar to utilitarianism; it requires that we accord more weight to animal interests but it doesn't really go beyond animal rights, by no means.

One of the other essays deals with a significant difference I have with Tom Regan. Regan actually likes Singer. In "The Case for Animal Rights," Regan talks about the problem of the dog and the lifeboat. And he says, if you're on the lifeboat and you've got a human and you've got a dog, that you should throw the dog over because, for a dog, death is a harm, but it's not as great a harm as it is for a human. So, Regan departs from Singer in that he acknowledges clearly that death is a harm for the dog, but he's somewhat like Singer and very, very much like Mill, John Stuart Mill, when he says, "Well, the opportunities for satisfaction for a dog are much more limited than the opportunities for satisfaction for a human."

As a matter of fact, what Regan says in the book is that, if you have a human being sitting on the boat and a million dogs, you should throw the million dogs overboard because the harm of death

for the human is qualitatively different than it is for any of the dogs. So, since all of the one million dogs will be harmed much less than the human will, then, we ought to get rid of the one million dogs; we ought to throw the one million dogs overboard. Now, of course it would have to be a very large lifeboat to have a million dogs. But, it's not a question of numbers for him and actually I don't know whether he actually says a million dogs or he just gives another high number, but the point is it doesn't really matter what the number is because he thinks that death is a greater harm for humans than it is for non-humans. So therefore, when we're in the situation where we have to choose, we ought to choose the non-human because humans have many more opportunities for satisfaction. Which strikes me as being outright speciesism because, I mean, I'm sitting here right now and I'm looking at my Border Collie with whom I am pictured in the jacket of the Columbia book –

Bob: A very cute picture, by the way.

Gary: I'm looking at Katie-Jane right now. And, can I say that I have more opportunities for satisfaction than she does? And the answer is, "I'm not really sure I could say that." I'm not sure how relevant it would be anyway, but I certainly don't think, as an empirical matter, we can say that humans have greater opportunities for satisfaction. And this again goes back to things like John Stuart Mill, writing in the 19th century that, because humans are able to engage in intellectual idea, we can sit around and have intellectual discussions like we're having right now, but we can sit around and have intellectual discussions and that gives us much more pleasure than the pleasure that animals feel. And the answer is "Well, who says? John Stuart Mill?"

Bob: I completely agree, I mean every night when we eat dinner, we give our dogs a treat and the enjoyment that our dogs get from this simple treat we give them every night, to me, is so complete and so thorough. And I can tell that it is complete and thorough for them in a way that it probably isn't complete and thorough for me if I get a treat. And I find that's why I agree with you fully here. I find that's a very troubling way to compare and to make these moral choices.

Gary: Well, you know, it's interesting. One of the things I discuss in the book is, it's really interesting how these ideas, these crazy ideas that we have about animals don't care about their lives, or they don't care that we use them, they only care how we use them or animals don't have as many opportunities for satisfaction as we have. These ideas are so deeply ingrained in our **speciesist** little pea brain that they even permeate people like Singer and Regan and others who are animal ethicists, or put themselves forward as animal ethicists, and put themselves forward as people who oppose speciesism. But yet there's really no way that you can justify these ideas except in terms of species discrimination; I mean, just outright discrimination based on species which leaves you to empirical conclusions about what these animals value and what they don't value. They're just nuts and totally arbitrary.

And I agree with you. I know we take the dogs out now that the weather is warm. We like getting up early in the morning and taking them for a walk so that they don't bake if we don't take them out at 12 o'clock. And when we were walking around this morning, I said to Anna – because the dogs, they like to stop at every tree and look up and look at the birds and look at the squirrels and it's clear that they're totally engaged and they're totally enjoying themselves; do I enjoy myself as much as they do? I don't know, but the one thing that I can say with certainty is *I don't know*

with certainty and it's certainly an open question in my mind so that I could never say that humans have greater opportunities for satisfaction because we can sit around and read books or play on the internet or do whatever it is we do that we find satisfying that represents some sort of qualitatively greater degree of enjoyment; I just think that's nuts.

Bob: Well, I agree with you. You're an interesting person to interview because I have all these questions and I think you just hit four of them in the last few minutes so, it's pretty cool. I kind of want to change gears for a second and make sure...

Gary: Ok.

Bob: I just want to make things clear, because in a lot of ways I think one of the things that continues to perplex people – I mean, even though we've talked about it repeatedly on our show and you've written about it and I've written about it – is this distinction between new welfarism and abolitionism. And one of the things I very commonly hear is, is this kind of like, not Rodney King, but, you know, remember this, "Why can't we all just get along?", right? After the Rodney, wasn't it after the Rodney King beatings?

Jenna: Yeah.

Gary: Yeah.

Bob: Yeah, ok, so why can't we all just get along? I keep hearing this kind of thing where people think, "Okay, that ultimately new welfarism and abolitionism, this is a false dichotomy, that ultimately we're fighting for the same thing and that we're taking sides, we're fracturing the movement into camps, it's all wrong-headed." And in your book, I think you do a very nice job – in all of your books, actually – but in this latest book, I think you do a really nice job, reflecting on the main insights that you've developed in your other two books, *Rain Without Thunder* and *Animals, Property, and the Law* and things like that. So I'm wondering if you could talk about why this distinction between welfarism and abolitionism is not a false dichotomy. I mean, why this is an important distinction and why it is one that matters.

Gary: Well, first of all new welfarism, when I first used that term, in '95 or '96, whenever I wrote that book, *Rain Without Thunder*, I was using it to refer primarily to people who took the position that it was wrong to use animals at all and that we ought to abolish all animal use but that the only way we could do that or the most effective way we could do that was to regulate, regulate, regulate and eventually one day we would achieve abolition. I would expand, and I actually did in *Rain Without Thunder*, and talk about it in different contexts, but now I'm more explicit about it.

New welfarists are people who either believe that regulation is going to lead to abolition in the future or that welfare regulation is going to lead to significant changes in how we treat animals until we get to some future point and we'll reduce animal use. In other words, the new welfarists can be the person who says that, "Welfare regulation is going to lead to abolition down the line." The new welfarist can also be the person who says that, "Well, I don't know whether it's going to lead to abolition down the line, and I may not even be in favor of abolition, but I am in favor

of animals being treated a lot better and I'm in favor of, of reducing animal use, uh, significantly from the point at which it's at now and I think regulation will do that." Those are related but different arguments, because there are a lot of folks out there who don't really talk about abolition being the end point. As a matter of fact, there are more now, there are more quote 'animal advocates' unquote, now have sort of gotten away from the idea that abolition is the desired endpoint.

But let me just say that the problem with that is. I mean, again, it's crazy, it's like saying, "What happens if this overweight guy who comes down the chimney at Christmas time and puts gifts in the stockings and stuff?" It's just not true; there's no proof that this works. As a matter of fact, there's quite a bit of proof that it doesn't work in that welfare regulation does not provide significant protection for animal interests, number one. Number two, there is absolutely no evidence, absolutely none, that regulating animal exploitation will lead to the abolition of anything, number one. Number two, there is no evidence that it leads to the significant reduction of animal use. I mean, the theory there apparently is – and this is, again, what I read from the welfarists – is that they take the position that, "Well, by regulating exploitation, we'll make it more expensive and thereby decrease demand." And the problem is that the regulation of animal use doesn't decrease demand because what it does is it increases production efficiency.

Bob: That's right.

Gary: Let me give you an example to put that into plain English. Look at this incredibly absurd campaign that PETA has to get poultry producers to adopt the controlled-atmosphere killing.

Bob: You just hit another one of our questions.

Gary: Ok, well, there you go, you see? It's a seamless web. And let's look at that campaign. If you look at the literature that comes out of groups like the Humane Society of the United States and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, it is focused on the idea that controlled-atmosphere killing will require a capital investment to change the equipment over to provide for gassing the birds. There are different ways of doing that, you can do it in a truck, you can do it in the factory and things like that, some are more expensive than others. But the studies show that the producers can recoup the costs in about a year and their profits go up dramatically in a number of different respects. So, controlled-atmosphere killing, which is the big campaign now, is something that is not going to result in people eating fewer chickens because the price is going to go up because of the welfare regulation. The production cost is going to go down. If anything, price will go down; price is not going to go up.

And if anything, the one thing that we can be certain of, is when you have PETA and HSUS and these other organizations praising poultry producers, when you have PETA saying that, "We have no differences with Kentucky Fried Chicken," what does that say to the public? What does that say to the public? What it says is that they called the boycott off of KFC Canada and they've said, "We don't have any differences, we don't have any welfare differences, we think that they're concerned about animal welfare." When you have statements coming out like that, what does that tell people? It tells people that it's okay to go eat at Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Jenna: mmhmm.

Gary: And it doesn't help to say, "Well, we really think people shouldn't eat chicken at all." But because you haven't even produced the argument for why people shouldn't be eating chicken, what you're doing is saying, "For those of you who think you shouldn't do it, but we think that Kentucky Fried Chicken is doing a good job and respecting the welfare of animals." What that does is, to the person who is concerned about the issue, but doesn't really understand the issue and has a family and a job and doesn't really have time to sort of think about this stuff, what the message that that gives to that person is, 'Go ahead and eat at Kentucky Fried Chicken.' So I don't really see how this is leading in the direction of abolition.

I've just been reading this past week some things coming from people like Bernard Rollin, who's out at Colorado, I guess – I don't know if he's at Colorado State University or University of Colorado – but he's a big animal ethics guy and he's an adviser for one of these welfare groups and he says that he doesn't think that he can say that controlled-atmosphere killing is more humane than electrical stunning. And there are a number of welfare scientist types that are used by these animal welfare groups quite a bit who are not willing to say that they even think controlled-atmosphere killing is a better situation than electrical stunning. But putting that aside, to say that this is going to lead in the direction of abolition or that it's going to reduce animal consumption because it's going to increase cost, not only is crazy, but it's crazy given the literature. Go on the PETA website. Read PETA's literature. And they've got study after study showing that controlled-atmosphere killing increases production efficiency and puts more money in the pocket of the poultry producers.

Bob: Yeah, you know, I...

Gary: I'm sorry.

Bob: Well, I looked at modified atmosphere killing for egg producers, actually. And it is the recommended way that the United Egg Producers recommends getting rid of quote unquote 'spent hands', right. So, it is something that the industry itself at least in egg production and also in poultry production, is recognized as extremely efficient.

Gary: Well, you know what this whole controlled-atmosphere thing, this whole campaign, shows. It really puts the spotlight on the business of animal welfare and the business of these organizations. Because what they do basically is, they identify practices that are on their way out anyway – because, I mean, you can look at the gestation crate campaign, look at the veal crate campaign, look at the controlled-atmosphere killing campaign. Basically, intensive animal agriculture was something that developed in the 1950s, basically in the United States. And, we are only now beginning to see the inefficiencies of the whole intensive agriculture situation. That is, the idea was when intensive agriculture first started was, "well, the more animals we can cram into a small space, the more money we'll make." People weren't thinking, the producers were not thinking, the people who developed intensive agriculture weren't thinking, "Well, we put all these animals together, they're going to get stressed, they're going to get sick, there's going to be diseases." People weren't thinking about that, they weren't factoring in the stress, because they think of these things as machines. They think of these animals as machines.

Bob: mmhmm.

Jenna: mmhmm.

Gary: And so they weren't thinking about the fact that these are sensitive, sentient beings that get stressed out, that get sick, that cannibalize each other. They weren't thinking about these things. And so, these inefficiencies are only now coming to light and Europe is clearly ahead in terms of there's more literature coming out of Europe about the inefficiencies of animal agriculture. It takes a while to get over here it takes awhile to come over here. But what's happening is the animal organizations are looking at things like gestation crates, which were on their way out in terms of the pork industry. Because the pork industry was realizing that gestation crates impose all sorts of costs that can be mitigated by giving the animals slightly more space and putting them in a slightly different situation. And using the electric sow-feeding method, for example.

The European producers are recognizing this. The European agricultural economists and agricultural scientists are publishing papers explaining why alternatives to the gestation crate or why alternatives to the veal crate are cost effective. And eventually, you know, that information – because it's an inefficient industry, the whole food industry is very inefficient from an economic standpoint – so that information takes a while to filter into the industry, the industry starts changing and what happens is you get these organizations. They are looking at practices that are on their way out anyway because they are economically inefficient. So then they start campaigns to have happen what's going to happen anyway, sooner or later.

One might even argue – it's interesting, my intuition tells me that there are probably a number of things that actually get delayed, changes that get delayed, because the animal people start focusing on something, and it may actually have the effect of delaying the implementation of what the industry is going to do anyway because it sets up a confrontation. But in any event, whether that's true or not, I am just saying, intuitively that strikes me as something that should be explored. But in any event, whether it does or doesn't, the organizations focus on things like gestation crates, veal crates, and the controlled-atmosphere killing issue. What we might want to call 'being vegans', the low hanging fruit of intensive agriculture, they campaign against these things. And then, when industry agrees to the change, which industry would, it's in the interests of industry anyway, industry goes ahead and says, "Yeah, we agree with this change," and then it's a win-win situation...

Bob: Sure.

Gary: ...because then industry gets to say, "We really care about animal welfare." And the animal people then say, "We've had a victory," and they all sing 'Koombaya' and you have these situations like you had with Kentucky Fried Chicken in Canada and PETA where you have PETA saying, "We think they really care about animal welfare" and you have Kentucky Fried Chicken saying, "We stand shoulder-to-shoulder with PETA," you know, "we really care about these issues." And it's great PR for the exploiter and it's great PR for the animal welfare organization, which will then paper the world with fund-raising appeals about 'Look what we did, this is revolutionary.'

Jenna: But it also proves that you have these victories and then they stop; it proves that welfarism is the end, not abolition.

Gary: I agree with you. The response that you'll get when you raise this with people is, "Well, we're not really telling them the truth, We really want to go further"; if I'm not mistaken – well, I shouldn't say because I don't really remember, but I have a recollection that this was actually stated explicitly with respect to the Humane Society of the United States. Certainly people say on the internet – whether it's true or not I don't know – but people certainly say on the internet that HSUS has got a more radical agenda, but they're just not upfront about it.

Bob: They're hiding it.

Gary: They're hiding it. And I mean this is silly, it's just silly, it's just completely silly. Anybody who thinks that Paul Shapiro's campaign to get colleges to get cage-free eggs and promoting cage-free eggs as being a really good alternative and a socially responsible alternative to the conventional battery cage is... If you really believe that that's the campaign to spend time on then we disagree. But the idea that that's going to get us to abolition, it's crazy. And I agree with you, Jenna, it really shows that it's an end in itself.

And let me mention another campaign that people are all excited about, it just bewilders me. In 1999, there was a directive that came out of the Council of Europe that said by 2012 the member states of the European Union had to get rid of the conventional battery cage. And all the animal people, PETA, HSUS and others, were all excited because several months ago, the European Commission, the EU, said that they weren't going to postpone the implementation of that directive. That, in fact, by 2012, the battery cage has to be gone. Now, of course in one sense that was silly because the reality is it will be impossible for all of the member states of the European Union to comply with that by 2012 given the present level of egg production in conventional batteries. It is impossible, actually, I believe, that the member states will be able to comply by 2012.

But putting that aside, what nobody ever talks about is the fact that the directive makes very clear that producers can satisfy the directive by implementing something called an enriched cage system. Which is basically a cage system that's a little bit bigger and has some litter for the hens to scratch and what not. And it has a perch. It's an enriched cage basically. In other words, the producers are not required to go cage-free or free range, not that those alternatives are a hell of a lot better, but they're not even required to do that. They're required to do enriched cages. Enriched cage eggs will cost less than one more Euro cent to produce than conventional battery eggs. And it's basically not going to put the producers at a cost disadvantage relative to the conventional battery eggs.

And what I find fascinating is, you have some of these animal organizations have actually put out papers. The Compassion In World Farming in 2002 put out a 27-page report about how enriched cages work. I mean, they put out this report saying enriched cages are terrible. They said enriched cages are no better than conventional battery cages, they don't provide any significant welfare benefit over the conventional battery cage. Nevertheless, when the

Commission in January of this past year said that were not going to postpone implementation of the directive – that basically everybody had to have enriched cages at least by 2012 – Compassion In Word Farming comes out says this is wonderful, this is great, it doesn't even bother to say, “And by the way, we think that the method that most of the producers are going to use – because it's the cheapest method and it's allowed under the directive – is no better than the conventional cage.” But again it's a situation where the organizations get to declare victory and get to say, “Oh, this really shows that the public and animal producers are sensitive to the public's concerns about animal welfare” and blah, blah, blah. And yet the change, the reform if you want to call it that, that is going to happen – which is going to be the enriched cage because that's the cheapest of the three methods and that's the one that most of the producers are going to use – is something that the organizations themselves acknowledge does not provide significant improvement of welfare benefit over the conventional cage. So this is really smoke, mirrors, and entertainment.

Bob: But Professor Francione, people often claim that abolitionism has to have an incremental strategy.

Gary: It sure does, Bob. It's called veganism. [laughter]

Bob: Well, exactly; that's what I'm getting at. But here's the thing, right. The critique is that we ultimately put our own ideology over the everyday suffering of animals, that we're asking too much of people, that veganism is too difficult, and I'm wondering if you could give a response to those critiques and how you view veganism as that incremental change.

Gary: Well, if we're ever going to change anything we have a paradigm to shift. In other words, we need to get people to stop seeing animals as things and stop regarding them as commodities. And we need to get people to understand that if we take animal interests seriously, the first thing we do is we get them off of our plates. And so yes, abolition does involve an incremental strategy. And that is: you go vegan, Jenna goes vegan, I go vegan, Anna goes vegan, and we educate everybody that we can to become vegans and we have more and more and more vegans, demand does drop if we have more and more vegans. I mean, just think about it for a second. If we took the millions, and I actually think it's probably billions, if we took the billions that we have spent in the United States alone. This is an argument I made in 1986 or '87, nobody listened to me then either. If we took the billions of dollars that we have spent on animal advocacy since 1986 and we put that into vegan education, really good, clear vegan education, unequivocal vegan education –

Bob: With naked people or no?

Gary: No, no naked people [laughter]. No, no. Just straight, clear, creative, non-violent vegan education, we would now in 2008 – I was going to say 2009 but it's not quite – we would by 2008 have many, many more vegans than we do. And that would be significant not only for reducing demand, but for forming the foundation of a political movement that was truly an abolitionist movement. To call the animal rights movement 'a movement' is a misuse of the word 'movement', it really isn't a social movement at all. I don't regard it as a social movement at all, I think it's part business, part cult, not a whole lot of social movement.

Bob: It's incoherent if it is.

Gary: Exactly, as a social movement it's absolutely incoherent. But I think that if we had put that money into vegan education, I think we would be a lot better off than we are now. We're using more animals now in more horrific ways than any other point in human history. So where are these people coming up with this idea that welfare regulation is going to lead to reduced use, welfare regulation is going to lead to abolition. And as far as the comment you made when, at the outset of your question when people say, "Well, we've got to do something now to help the animals." And the answer is, "what is it that you're doing now to help the animals? How is this helping the animals? How is the European egg battery directive, how is that helping animals? How is the controlled-atmosphere killing thing helping animals?" It was going to happen anyway, I mean, to the extent that it's economically efficient, as you pointed out. The United Egg Producers recommend it as a cost efficient way of dealing with spent hens in the egg-laying business, correct?

Bob: That's right.

Gary: Alright, so it's going to happen anyway, so what is it that we're doing except reinforcing – you see this is problem, welfare reinforces the property paradigm, it reinforces the idea that it's okay to use animals and the only question is how we treat them. And that reinforces the property paradigm, it doesn't get us away from the property paradigm. What we need to do is get away from the property paradigm.

And when people say, "Well, people aren't going to become vegans," you know what, I'd like to tell you, and I'm sure this happens with you to, but I wish I had a nickel for every email I have gotten over the years, or every letter that I got before we started with email, where people say, "I've read your stuff, I really never thought about it that way before, it's absolutely clear that veganism is really the only solution." I think it's tremendously negative, I also think it's tremendously elitist, to think that only those of us who are smart enough or good enough or whatever can understand the argument about veganism. It's a very simple argument.

Most people do, or many people do, certainly we have enough we can work with right now, we can worry about how deep the pool goes, there's a pool there that we haven't really begun to tap, of people who are concerned about animals and are concerned, and do think that animals have moral significance, have their own companion animals or have had companion animals, and have deep feelings about animals and what not. Those are people who that we should be talking to saying, "Well, look, if you cared why are you acting in this morally schizophrenic way and eating them." If we regard them as members of the moral community at all, then we ought to stop eating them. That's the first step. We can talk about the other issues, should we be using them for experiments – no, I don't think that we should. But I think that's a more complicated argument.

Bob: It is.

Jenna: mmhmm.

Gary: It requires a ramped up argument in essence whereas there is no argument for using animals for food. It's a completely frivolous, trivial use of animals. It results in enormous amount of suffering and death, it is an absolutely, inexplicably, unjustifiable practice and people really need to be sort of confronted with that. And when I say confronted, I don't mean in an aggressive way, I mean in a clear way, in a non-violent way, in a creative way. And I often get the question, "Well, what if somebody says to you, "I hear what you are saying and I agree with you and I would like to do it but I can't do it right away, so therefore I'm going to eat cage-free eggs." And I always say, "No, no don't do that." There's an answer for that: don't go to cage-free eggs, what you should do is if you really feel – first of all, it's really not difficult – you can do it, you can start today, it's easy, it's a lot easier than it was when I became a vegan 26 years ago or whatever. But if you feel you can't do it, well, let me make a suggestion: why don't you start with one vegan meal a day.

Bob: mmhmm.

Gary: Start with breakfast and eat no animal products. Not cage-free eggs, but no animal products whatsoever, no butter, no eggs, nothing. And then see that you're not going to die and see that in fact you can figure out what foods to eat without having nutritional deficiencies and in fact it's probably going to even help your health. Get used to vegan breakfast. And then go to vegan lunch. And then go to vegan dinner. And then get them out of your snacking regiment or whatever and do that, if you want to do that in three of four steps, do that in three or four steps. But I don't think we should ever be in a position of saying to people that the morally acceptable solution is to eat something that's been made in the concentration camp that had color televisions rather than in the one that didn't. And it is to me obscene, that we have people who claim to be animal rights advocates and I'm using that deliberately, they claim to be animal rights advocates. Going around to colleges or any place else and saying to people, "Eat cage-free eggs, that's a morally acceptable thing to do." And the answer is, I don't think we should ever be in a position of saying something like that. If somebody says, "Look, I really buy the arguments but I'm not really sure I can go vegan right away," I would not say to that person continuing to eat any level of animal products is okay. I would say it's never okay. If you feel you can't do it, then at least try to do it in stages.

Bob: I agree.

Gary: The idea that animal people, people who call themselves animal rights advocates, are going around saying to people – I mean, like Singer. The idea that Singer goes around saying to people being a conscientious omnivore is a defensible ethical position is in my judgment obscene.

Bob: I completely agree with that and interestingly one of the first moments I had where it was really driven home to me just how horrible the new welfarist approach was, was actually in that cage-free campaign. I was actually starting to work on one of those cage-free campaigns a number of years ago on our local campus and I was in the position where I was being asked to provide information to our dining services about cage-free egg producers. And I had this moment where I thought, 'Holy hell, what am I doing? I am a vegan, I am opposed to it at its root. Why am I passing on information about cage-free egg producers so that these people can buy more

eggs?,' things that I'm opposed to the production of to begin with. So I completely understand that point. I do want to play devil's advocate a bit, I mean, the thing that often comes up is – it's akin to kind of negotiating for the rights of prisoners, right? One of the examples I've often heard is this: there are prisoners in Guantanamo Bay, they are held there unjustly. One can recognize that their imprisonment is unjust, but one could also be the Red Cross and go in and fight for better conditions for those prisoners. That is often the same kind of argument I hear for animals under the ideas of new welfarism, that okay look, these are simply prisoners of a system, the system is unjust, we're working for abolition, but since we're not going to have abolition tomorrow we need to actually watch out for the interest of those prisoners. How do you respond to that argument?

Garry: Well, there are a number of different responses. First of all, I'm not going to defend what goes on in Guantanamo Bay or indeed what goes on in non-Guantanamo Bay prisons in the United States.

Bob: Oh, I agree.

Gary: I'm not going to defend that. But I do think that there's a huge difference between – I'm not saying we're not violating, we are violating people's rights and it's horrible, it's dreadful and it should be stopped. But I do think that what goes on with animals is qualitatively different in the sense that even though people in those settings and a variety of other settings are abused and exploited, the exploitation of non-human animals is qualitatively different because they are property. There's discrimination and then there's slavery. Discrimination is horrible. Discrimination still exists in the United States of America. It undoubtedly exists in racial discrimination. It's different from slavery. This is one of the reasons why slavery is regarded under the laws of every nation and as a matter of international law – as a matter of fact, the prohibition against slavery is a rule of customary international law of which there are very few such rules. It bespeaks sort of a universal agreement that slavery is a qualitatively different sort of harm. Chattel slavery. And the idea that humans are commodities is something that we regard as obnoxious in a way, it sort of puts it in a separate category. Again, we do all sorts of things we shouldn't do. We discriminate in all sorts of ways we shouldn't discriminate, we do all sorts of terrible things to people. There's a difference between discrimination and chattel slavery where all of one's interests, including one's interests in life and not suffering, can have a price tag attached to them and can be sold away depending on whether or not it's in someone else's benefit to do so, someone else's economic interest to do so. That's point number one. I think that chattel slavery, just as chattel slavery represents to us a qualitatively different sort of harm that we put in a category by itself and that the laws of all nations and international law put in a category by itself, I think there's that difference.

Number two, when you have people doing reforms in whatever context, whether it's in Guantanamo Bay or whether it's in anything, you're dealing with situations in which people are saying, "Look, we're not going to end this today. We would like to end it, we think this is terrible, but we think that people ought to be given this particular benefit or that particular benefit in the interim." At least they're making clear what the endpoint is. What really troubles me about the new welfare movement is that they'll say at conferences, "Oh, we think animal exploitation is terrible." But let me tell you something, if you don't go to these animal

conferences or you're really not reading literature – the literature's all confusing anyway – but basically if you're a normal human being who's just reading the newspaper, you come away with the idea that at best the animal people are terribly confused. You don't get the idea that the animal people think that all animal use is a bad idea and is morally unjustifiable and is moral obscenity. You just don't get that.

Bob: That's so true.

Gary: You just don't get that. But again, what I think is going on in Guantanamo Bay is terrible, I think what goes on in most prisons is terrible, I think the fact that we're such a rich nation – or we used to be – and that we have so many poor people, we have such a level of poverty and we have such a level of horrible healthcare situations, these are things that are terrible, they're terrible. But I still think that those injustices, as bad as they are and as much as I would like to see them rectified, are still very, very different from the commodification of sentient beings. I mean, look, we do things to animals in the best of these new welfare delusional happy havens. It was Erik Markus I think that described the difference between...what was the distinction he made between –

Bob: The Connecticut minimum security prison, right?

Gary: Yeah, he said that conventional eggs were like Guantanamo Bay and cage-free eggs were like a minimum security Connecticut prison or something like that, is that a fair characterization of what he said?

Bob: I believe it is.

Gary: That's my recollection at least. I just think that is...if it weren't so pathetic, it would be funny. Anybody who thinks that cage-free eggs represent any sort of significant welfare improvement over battery eggs has never seen a cage-free facility. They're horrible places. I would urge anybody and everybody who's interested in the question to log on to the Peaceful Prairie website and take a look at the free-range...they have a video that they have of hens that came from a free-range facility. And take a look at their videos, take a look at their literature, and tell me that cage-free eggs represent any sort of significant welfare improvement over the conventional battery eggs. And I think that if we look at how we're treating animals under the best situations, free range, cage-free, whatever, it constitutes torture of a sort that we don't put any human beings through and when anybody finds out that we do anything even remotely similar, there's a huge outcry. So, I just think that it's just different. It really is different. And again, I want to emphasize I am not in any way denigrating the human rights issues that are pressing, important, and the tremendous injustice going on towards human beings. I just think our institutionalized exploitation of animals represents something that is torture of the most severe sort. We readily get upset and concerned when we torture people doing things like water boarding and yet we do things to non-human animals that are far, far, far worse than water boarding.

§ End of Part 1 of 2 of Gary's interview >

Vegan Freaks Interview with Gary Francione – Part 2 (June 26, 2008)

Transcribed by David Stasiak
Revisions by Benjamin Schmeiser

Bob: I want to also get you to talk about some of the critiques that have been made against some of your theory and one of the things that I found interesting in the book when I was reading it was your responses to Cass Sunstein and for those people who haven't read the book yet, and I hope everyone will go out and buy it, because it's a great book, but –

Gary: I just found out yesterday, I put it on the website, Columbia is having a sale until August 1 and you can get the book for 50% off. And so you can get a hardcover book for \$20 which is nothing these days.

Bob: That's great!

Gary: You can go to the Columbia university website or you can link to it my going to www.abolitionistapproach.com which is Anna's and my website. And I also want to announce to your listeners that early in July, Bob and Jenna are going to come and set up our podcasting equipment so that we can get into the podcasting business. Yeah, so you can get the book. Go ahead, I'm sorry I didn't mean to interrupt you.

Bob: That's, ok. We'll make sure to mention all that again too.

Gary: Yes, yes.

Bob: You have a response to Sunstein. Let me set up his argument very quickly and you can correct me if I'm being a little too hasty, but Sunstein basically argues that the property status of animals is really not an impediment to providing better protections for them. As examples, he says things like, "You own your house but you're not allowed to blow it up whenever you feel like it." You own a stereo, it's your property, but you can't play music as loudly as you want as you have neighbors nearby who care about you doing that. And what Sunstein does is he uses that as a way of talking about how merely the property question does not prevent the recognition of certain other kinds of obligations and interests. And I'm wondering if you could discuss your response to these critiques and why you think Sunstein's critiques are ultimately wrong.

Gary: Well, let me say, I have a lot of respect for Cass, I think he's a really smart guy and he's a nice guy and I like him personally very, very much. I disagree with him because...I've never disputed that we can regulate our use of animal property better than we do. We clearly can, I mean, there's nothing that necessarily stops us. We could decide tomorrow, for example, that we're going to enact a whole bunch of regulations on our use of animals that wouldn't end animal use, but would provide significantly greater protection for animal interests. We could do that. If we did that, it would drive up the price of animal products – and I'm confining most of my comments to the use of animals for food is the most important use of animals because we're killing 12 billion animals alone every year, every other use sort of pales in comparison, we can talk about specific other uses, but I'm directing most of my comments to the use of animals for

food – but if we were to do that. Could we in theory pass a law tomorrow that says, ‘No more intensive farms. We have to have farms that look like 19th century, early 20th century factory farms’ and we describe those with some required legal specificity and we said no more intensive agriculture. All animals have to be produced on family farms and they have to have these characteristics. Could we do that? Could we do that as a matter of ‘could we?’ and the answer is, ‘sure, sure we could’. It would only result in the price of animal products going wild and you’d probably have a revolution. It’s not clear to me what it takes to get the American people upset. Gas prices seem to be getting them upset. But let me tell you something: if you got rid of intensive agriculture tomorrow and you were to require that all animals be produced in family farms sorts of settings, the price of animal products would go up dramatically. Sure demand would go down – even though demand is pre-stable for many of these products, the price would become so extreme that demand would go down and it would really affect producers and consumers. And you’d probably have a lot of upset people and you’d probably see a greater political reaction than we’ve ever seen about anything.

So, in response to Professor Sunstein’s analysis, I agree with Cass that we could do more to regulate how people treated their animal property, but the problem is it’s an economic matter. Every time we protect an animal interest, it costs money to the extent that we’re not getting an economic benefit in return for that expenditure. Then what we’re doing is – however you want to think about it – we’re taxing the ownership for use of animals or we’re imposing an opportunity cost that is not justified by the production costs of the product. And that causes the price to go up. And at some point in time, demand will be affected. There are other things to think about as well and that is: we live in a world that’s very different from the world we lived in in the not too distant past in that we have these free trade agreements now...

Bob: mmhmm.

Gary: ...and they govern most of the world basically. And many countries are part of more than one regiment. But in any event these free trade agreements generally are thought to prohibit imposing restrictions on importing things for moral reasons. So even if – this is a problem that’s occurring in Europe – even if you have – like Austria for example has gotten rid of battery eggs. Again, I’m not all that familiar and I’m repeating what I’ve read and I’ve not looked at the actual laws in part because I don’t read German.

But Austria I believe has either abolished or has significantly reduced the number of places that are using conventional battery cages. What I have read is that they have banned them. Nevertheless, egg demand in Austria has increased and egg production has increased. And so whatever is happening in Austria it’s not affecting the demand. Demand is going up and production is going up. And even if production were to be affected, even if the price of eggs got to the point where it was so high that demand was affected, you can’t stop a member nation of the EU from importing the eggs from say Poland or Spain or whatever or places that basically have no non-conventional egg production. I mean Spain is like 95 or 98% conventional battery egg production. So the extent that the prices went up in Austria, you could just import it. You could import the eggs and there’s nobody that could stop you from doing that. So to the extent that the demand is there then the product will come in. This is happening in Britain because a number of meat producers in Britain have made some changes where they have moved away a

bit from the intensive model. And some of the larger chains are selling meat that they claim to have been produced in more humane settings. And to the extent that that is making prices go up, meat is being imported from places that don't have those standards. So to the extent that the demand is there, you're going to have that demand. This is a problem that we didn't really have – and you're more of an economist than I am, actually, virtually anyone is more of an economist that I am – you certainly are, you've been trained in this stuff. But I don't think we were really looking at something like that fifty years ago. These free trade regimes are actually making it so that if country X passes some regulation and it does actually have an effect on demand, then what's going to happen is the product is going to come in from some other market. You can't stop it. I mean, isn't that correct?

Bob: Absolutely. It could begin through an unfair barrier in a trade.

Gary: Yeah exactly. And another thing to keep in mind here that a lot of animal welfare people just don't seem to understand is, when you increase the price of an animal product, there are two things that are important to keep in mind here. Point number one is that the demand for many animal products is fairly what, was we say 'inelastic', in the sense that you can raise the price and demand isn't going to be affected. I mean, obviously, at some point demand will be affected. But you can raise the price certainly a couple of cents. To the extent that egg prices go up a couple of cents, it's not going to affect the demand for eggs, because the demand for eggs is fairly inelastic. Now at some point, if it goes up \$10 an egg, then demand is going to be affected.

But the sorts of increases that we're talking about – the sorts of increases from conventional battery eggs to cage-free eggs and free range eggs, particularly now since some producers that are going to the cage-free and the free range models, are just constructing these enormous barns. So instead of the birds being in the small battery cages they're just in one huge cage and they're all walking over each other and urinating on each other, defecating, and they're still fighting, it's just horrible. Most of these places are just again taking advantage of what they perceive to be the economies at scale. And as the egg producers get better at this and as they figure out ways to sort of cut down on the number of eggs that get cracked or that are not retrievable because the birds are walking around or whatever, they'll get better at that, and they'll increase the efficiencies of those methods of production. But even now, they don't really have a lot of experience particularly here with those methods of production. Even now the cost increase is not all that great, so it's not really going to affect demand. So the argument that regulation affects demand is nonsense. Because most animal welfare regulation don't even increase cost, they reduce production costs, and if anything, prices will go down. Certainly prices don't go up. But even in those situations where prices do go up moderately, the demand for most of these products is such that consumers will continue to consume at the same level because the demand is what we say is 'inelastic'. That there aren't substitutes for those products, so people will go to fewer movies or something or they'll do other things to economize, but they'll continue to buy the same number of eggs.

But the other point is even to the extent that people say, "Well, the price of this animal product has gone up," that doesn't mean they buy tofu. I mean, this is another crazy idea that sort of underlies the welfarist mistaken way of going about thinking about these issues. And that is – because I hear welfarists all the time say, "Well, it's going to increase the price and then people

will buy vegetables.” And the answer is: ‘no they don’t’. If the price of beef goes up, people don’t buy tofu. They buy pork, they buy chicken, they buy fish, whatever. If the price of pork goes up they buy beef, they buy chicken, whatever. At some point in time if they can’t afford any of those products, they’ll buy processed animal products in cans or frozen or whatever.

Bob: That’s right.

Jenna: You see that happening now with the price of the grain going up, the price of meat and dairy has gone up. So you don’t really see the demand overall dropping. People, like you said, aren’t buying vegetables.

Gary: No. As a matter of fact, I think that the demand for animal protein – here I’m really getting in uncharted territory because as I said I’m not an economist. But my working premise here is that the demand for animal protein is infinitely elastic. Inelastic rather. In the sense that however much you raise prices, people will continue to buy animal products, they’ll just buy different ones. And the whole theory of animal welfare is that by regulating you will increase price and decrease demand. I’ve had welfarists make that argument to me very explicitly: “Well, but we’re going to regulate and by regulating we decrease demand.” And the answer is: ‘what’s your proof? What’s your proof of that?’. In fact there doesn’t seem to be any proof of it, it seems that first of all the regulations don’t increase price. Secondly, to the extent they do, it’s minimal. And it’s offset by this fact that then the producers are able to say, “Oh, you can feel better about this product because it’s being made more humanely.”

Bob: And I also think that what we see increasingly too are companies that are tying a lot of their business model to these kinds of products. I mean, look at Wholefoods. Wholefoods ties a significant proportion of their business model to animal compassion, and whatever they want to call it, to these kinds of products. So, if in fact it made no economic sense, if that argument were true, we wouldn’t see businesses using it as a way to make profit.

Gary: Absolutely. Absolutely. And what’s really tragic about it is. Again I don’t think that any animal exploitation, however humane, can be justified. But it’s not that Wholefoods is only selling meat from animals who live on factory farms and killed them in some kind way, if that’s even possible. It’s not that at all. Darian Ibrahim who – I think he’s at the University of Arizona although I’m not sure – but he did an article in which he argued that the Wholefood animal compassion standards were no better, were not significantly better than conventional standards. So, what happens is that Wholefoods is saying “Oh well we’re really concerned about the welfare of animals so we have this animal compassionate program.” And you’re right, you see these people, they’re tying their businesses to these notions, but the cash value of what they’re doing, the actual practical benefit of what animals are getting from this is minimal if at all. And what ends up happening is, you end up making people feel better about exploitation. And that in and of itself has the effect of encouraging people to continue to consume. Which is why you are seeing story after story after story after story – all you need to do is to get on the internet and do some superficial research and you will find thousands of stories about people who are returning to eating meat because they were concerned, for them it was an issue of...

Bob: An issue of what? We lost that.

Gary: I'm sorry – it's because of my call waiting, I hate call waiting, I should actually get rid of it. It should stop now – That what happens is many people became vegetarian or vegan because they bought the suffering argument. They bought the argument that the reason why it's wrong to eat animals is because animals suffer. I agree, animals suffer and we shouldn't make them suffer, but it goes beyond that. We shouldn't take their lives. However nicely we treat them. It doesn't matter whether I'm really nice to you. I shouldn't show up at your room tonight while you're sleeping and put a gun to your head and blow your brains out. You wouldn't feel anything but it would be wrong. But we've never really bought that argument when it comes to animals. That painless death is still a harm. In part because – and again this is what I discuss in *Animals as Persons* in the new book – the history of our thinking about this came out of the idea that animals didn't have an interest in their lives. So it was okay to kill them. If they live pleasant lives and kill them in a relatively painless way, that's an okay thing to do. And that's the idea that sort of dominates even the movement now. Because that's Singer's view and even though Regan argues against animal use he still says in the situation in which you've got to make a choice, you're morally obligated to choose the human over the animal because humans care about their lives more. And so I think that this whole way of sort of approaching the issue is problematic.

But what we're seeing now is people who say, "Well, I became a vegetarian because I was concerned about animal suffering, but now I can go to the store and I can buy certified humane raised and handled." That's one of labels that HSUS and a lot of these other organizations sponsors and promotes, the 'certified humane raised and handled' label. Or PETA and Farm Sanctuary and these other groups supporting the animal compassionate standard of Wholefoods. The RSPCA in Britain has a Freedom Food or whatever logo. And so now people feel that they can go to the store and they can buy their corpses and their animal products that have been certified to be humanely produced and they feel good about that now. And so if anything, this welfarist nonsense is perpetuating and continuing the consumption of animals. That's why it doesn't make sense. And let me just say, you raised an issue before about the welfarists saying "Why can't we all get along?" and the answer is...some of my best friends are welfarists now [laughter]. It's simply a question of disagreement. The one thing that I find really peculiar about these welfarists is they can't discuss this stuff. They can't discuss it. I'm happy to debate and discuss with anybody about this. As a matter of fact, I believe you tried to set up a debate between Singer and me on Vegan Freaks and he declined to do so.

Bob: I did. He declined.

Gary: Yeah. And my view is that let's talk about it. Let's talk about it. I'm happy to debate it and discuss it with anybody. If I'm wrong about things I will be happy to acknowledge that I am wrong about that but you know what? No one is making any arguments that make any sense to me. Nobody's making any valid or sound arguments about why they is that I'm wrong, they just tell, "Oh, we don't agree with you." That's fine. It's interesting but it's not much use. And so my view is, 'Hey look let's talk about it'. I don't think that people who are welfarists are bad people. I mean it's not that I'm saying that they're morally iniquitous people, I just think they're wrong.

When somebody says to me, “Why can’t we all get along?” and the answer I don’t have animosity towards people anyway I just think they’re wrong. But what they’re really asking is “Why won’t you support welfarist reform?” When somebody says “Why can’t we all get along?”, what that’s code for “Why won’t you support welfare reform?” And the answer is, because I think it’s misconceived on a number of different levels. First of all, I think it’s theoretically wrong because if animals are morally significant we shouldn’t be using them however humanely we treat them and therefore we shouldn’t be promoting their use however humane it is or isn’t, number one. Number two, as a practical matter animal welfare doesn’t work. All it does is ensure greater production efficiency and it doesn’t provide any significant protection for animal interests, what it does do is it makes people feel more comfortable about animal exploitation, what it does do is give a series of meaningless, useless campaigns to these animal welfare organizations which then fundraise off of the supposed victories which aren’t victories at all. And that’s why I think it’s just wrong. And so when somebody says, “Well, Why don’t you want to spend some time talking to colleges, why don’t you want to go to Rutgers and get Rutgers to go cage-free?” and the answer is, because life is short and to the extent that I have time to spend on animal advocacy, which I spend a great deal of my time on, I would rather educate people about veganism rather than telling people that they can discharge their moral obligations to non-humans by eating cage-free eggs. When in fact, I think that’s morally wrong because I don’t think they can discharge their moral obligations to animals by eating cage-free eggs, number one. And number two, I think as a practical matter cage-free eggs are not a significant improvement over the battery cage anyway. So what is it that we’re talking about here?

Bob: Yeah and promoting veganism works, because I’ve seen it work from people who are teenagers up to people who – actually, I had two people out of my class who were in their sixties and they went vegan. So the whole ‘Oh it’s possible to be too old or you’re too set in your ways’ argument: that is just complete crap. Anybody can go vegan, and I’ve seen it work.

Gary: Absolutely. And this idea that a lot of people aren’t going to go vegan – well, that’s true a lot of people aren’t going to go vegan. But you know what? I don’t care what it is you’re promoting, I mean you’re promoting cage-free eggs, a lot of people aren’t going to eat cage-free eggs. A lot of people don’t care, a lot of people just don’t care about morality. So what are we going to do? Are we going to have a movement that sees that person as the person we’re trying to get and the answer is, some people it doesn’t matter what your movement looks like, they’re really not interested. And so we shouldn’t ratchet our movement – I was going to say *our* movement, there ain’t no movement – ratchet *the* movement down so that we’re trying to cater to – or cater *for* I guess is a better preposition – the person who doesn’t give a darn about morality at all. There are a lot of people out there who actually do care about morality. There are a lot of people who are wonderful, who really do care about these issues, they just don’t think clearly. We live in an age where people watch a lot of television, and it’s amazing anybody can think at all after watching television. But people just don’t think clearly about the issue, they need to be educated about the issue, they *can* be educated about the issue.

You and I as educators have had that experience of talking about this issue and talking about veganism as a matter of common sense. I mean it drives me crazy when you have these animal people who portray veganism as something that can only be done by the ‘super people’, the

people who really are devoted and dedicated and it's only the special people. That's nonsense. Anybody can be a vegan, it's easy to do, as a matter of fact it's extremely easy to do.

Bob: It is.

Gary: And certainly it's incredibly easy to do in a place like the United States. It's easy to do virtually anywhere. But it's particularly easy to do here. To the extent that you want processed vegan foods which are not nutritionally good for you anyway, but to the extent that you want vegan junk food, this place has got more vegan junk food than any place on the planet.

Bob: That's right.

Jenna: That's true.

Gary: So you can satisfy your cravings for 80 zillion milligrams of salt and chemicals and all sorts of stuff and still be a vegan. So it's very, very easy to be a vegan. And I'm just tired of this "Oh, it's too hard to be a vegan." If you tell people it's too hard to be a vegan then you're doing a disservice to veganism. I always tell people it's extremely easy to be a vegan. And they say "Well, I have to research it" and it's like, what the hell do you have to research?

Bob: Just go do it.

Gary: It's not all that difficult, it really is very, very easy to be a vegan and to live in a very healthy way. And we are so confused. If I hear one more NPR story about the effect of ethanol on corn prices and have one more person talking about how the problem with corn prices is ethanol and should we be concerned – yes, we should be concerned about global warming, but when people are starving...actually there was a program I heard not long ago in which someone was arguing that yes, we ought to be concerned about global warming, but it's really horrible because people are starving because of these high grain prices and it's the high grain prices caused by ethanol. You have to sort of catch your breath when you hear something like that because to the extent that ethanol and ethanol production is causing corn to go up, it's miniscule in terms of the fact that what's really causing the price of grain to go up – apart from just speculation, economic speculation, which is what's driven up oil – is the fact that you have places like India and China are increasing their meat consumption. And people all over the world are increasing their meat consumption, which is causing the price of grain to go through the roof. It's not ethanol, ethanol is only a small piece of the puzzle.

The much larger piece of the puzzle is meat consumption and dairy consumption. It's animal protein – putting aside the moral issue – is an incredibly inefficient way of feeding people. It takes between six and twelve pounds of plant protein to produce one pound of flesh. It takes a thousand times more water than it does to produce...I mean, it's an inefficient way of producing food. And what it's doing is – animal agriculture is causing the price of grain to go crazy. It's not ethanol. Ethanol is a small part of the problem. Animal agriculture is putting the world's water stock, which is diminishing to the point now where we're having serious drought issues, where the people who predict the future – I don't mean fortune tellers. What do you all call economists who talk about future trends? I forget, there's a name for such people – but where those people are saying, the problem in the future, the economic problem which is going to cause massive

devastation is water scarcity. And animal agriculture is the prime culprit for that. And animal agriculture as we know from the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations says that animal agriculture is as bad if not worse than fossil fuel consumption in terms of greenhouse gases and global warming.

Bob: That's right.

Jenna: mmhmm.

Gary: So what are we doing? It seems to me that the morality of it, the health aspects of it, and the environmental and human rights issues all point in one direction and that's veganism. And this idea that we're telling people, 'Eat cage-free eggs'. I find that obscene on a number of different levels: morally wrong, not good for their health, and it's perpetuating an elitist way of consumption. You know? It's because we have the money to buy this stuff, we do it. And we condemn a substantial part of the world's population to starvation – and I'm not saying that's the only reason why that people starve because there's a lot of political corruption and all sorts of other things – but I mean it's a bad thing to do and all of the arrows point in one direction, and that is veganism. It's what makes sense as a moral matter, as a matter of health, as a matter of ecology and human rights. It's devastating what we're doing to other people, human and non-human.

Jenna: Definitely. And so that's in a sense the easier argument to make and you said earlier that if you were going to argue against something like vivisection or experimenting on animals you sort of have to ramp up your argument. But you do talk about this in your book in another chapter, so can you briefly discuss some of the ways that people can articulate a meaningful response to this difficult argument? Because a lot of people don't think it's morally wrong to use animals for their benefit.

Gary: Well, I have a chapter in *Animals as Persons* in which I talk about the necessity of using animals in experiments and there are two parts to the chapter: the first part of the chapter deals with the claim that – you know many people believe, because they're told, we need to be using animals in experiments. Putting aside the moral issue, that there's no way we can get this knowledge unless we use animals. Again put aside the moral issue and just focus on what we might want to call the 'practical issue'. Is animal use the only way we can get particular sorts of knowledge? And the first part of the article, I argue no it's not – there are certainly a lot of questions about that. That is, to say animal use is necessary in order to get this information is a complicated assertion. For example, let me give just give you one example of where a claim like that becomes complicated. We say, "Well, if we want to find a cure for a particular disease, we need to use animals." Well, that assumes – I mean, we live in a world of limited resources so we're only going to spend a certain amount of money on a problem anyway. We *can* only spend a certain amount of money on a problem. And the decision to do animal experiments, even if they will result in useful information, is a decision that we make and we ignore other ways of solving the problem. For example, we spend lots of money doing animal experiments to try to find cures or treatments for AIDS. And the amount of useful knowledge that we have gotten from doing animal experiments, in terms of understanding AIDS, is minimal. We've learned very, very little actually. The affective treatments have all been developed in humans. Now, the

problem is that we don't want to spend money – I mean, we spend money on however much money we spend on animal experiments to find cures or treatments for AIDS. You want to really reduce the number of new AIDS cases? Then pass out condoms, pass out needles to addicts, educate kids and other people about safe sex, spend all that money on those sorts of things and you will dramatically reduce the number of new cases of HIV. But we don't want to do that. Because we don't want to educate people about safe sex, we don't want to distribute condoms and we don't want to distribute needles to junkies, we don't want to do that.

Bob: You know what's interesting too, I was just reading in one of those magazines Time or Newsweek today that 70% of all cancers come from lifestyle choices.

Gary: Absolutely!

Bob: And so it's the same thing, right? It's education about the lifestyle choices, but we don't want to do that.

Gary: Absolutely. I mean, if you take all the money – I mean, you'll never eradicate cancer, there will always be some. But if you want to dramatically, really, super dramatically cut down on cancer, take all the damn money which is being used for cancer experiments and educate people about lifestyle changes. About not eating meat, not eating dairy. Getting some minimal exercise. Not smoking. Not consuming alcohol in large amounts. Things like that. Educating people about things like that.

Bob: In large amounts, I like that.

Gary: I'm sorry, what?

Bob: You said not consuming alcohol in *large* amounts, I like that.

Gary: In large quantities. And I don't want to offend any straight edge people out there. You educate people about lifestyle changes, you will cut down dramatically on the number of new cancer cases. But what do we do? No, we don't want to do that because to the extent that we do that then the meat industry gets upset, the dairy industry gets upset, the cigarette industry gets upset, the alcohol industry gets upset. People make money in this country from other people getting sick. And that's a fact of life in this place that nobody makes a buck in our system unless other people get sick. And so there really isn't an interest in preventing, there's an interest in intervening once people have gotten ill. I mean, if you took the money that we spend on cancer research and we put it into education and lifestyle changes, you would cut down dramatically on the number of cancer cases. And when I make this argument to people, they say, "Well, you're still going to have people, what about the people who have cancer and they're not going to get cured?" And the answer is, they're not going to get cured anyway. I mean, they're not going to get cured anyway. And at some point in time you have to ask yourself the question: should we be spending zillions and zillions of dollars...if we could in fact eradicate 70 to 80% spending the money that we're spending on research and development of treatments and cures, much of which involves animals, if we were able to eradicate 70 to 80% of it, maybe even more, wouldn't that be a better expenditure of the money than worrying about the 10% whose cancer we can't cure or

who are going to get in anyway because of genetic reasons or for whatever other reason, they're going to get it. We should do everything we can to help everybody. But the bottom line is everything's a trade off. Everything's a cost-benefit analysis. So, I mean the idea that we should continue to spend trillions of trillions of dollars so that we can cure everybody; the answer is, we're not going to do that anyway. That's silly. That's just Santa Claus thinking, that's Easter Bunny stuff, that's not going to happen.

Bob: Excellent. So is there anything else that you would like to touch on? Any other pieces of your book that you think are worth mentioning on the show that we haven't gotten to yet?

Gary: Umm, no. I do want to emphasize what I said before about – this is a matter of sincere intellectual dispute. That is, those of us who are concerned about animals really need to think about these issues. And need to discuss them. And the idea that I think that PETA's controlled-atmosphere killing campaign is a bad idea, doesn't mean that I'm an enemy and it means that I disagree. And I think that what one of the problems with the movement is this – and again I use movement loosely. But one of the problems with the animal 'phenomenon' or whatever you want to call it is that there is no discussion. And that anybody who disagrees is labeled an enemy of the people. And it's interesting because I wrote *Rain Without Thunder* in 1996 and it resulted in an enormous amount of animosity, people were very angry that I wrote the book, and of course they had nothing to say about it, they had nothing in substance to say. The level of sophistication of response was basically, 'Francione thinks that we ought to harm animals as much as possible because that's the only thing that's going to cause a change' and the answer is Francione never said that. That's outrageous. That's a silly, mischaracterization, misrepresentation of what I said. But I wrote that book and basically people in the movement got so upset, mainly the large organizations got so upset, that basically everybody stopped promoting my work, everybody stopped promoting my books, they stopped inviting me to the conferences, they weren't even interested in having the discussion. And it's only because the internet came along, and the internet's basically made it possible for people to communicate with each other and we don't have to use large corporate organizations anymore, we can talk to each other like you have your podcast, zillions of people listen to it. And that's only because we're not on the scene yet, but you'll have competition in the near future.

Jenna: Uh-oh.

Gary: But right now, you're talking to thousands of people who listen to Vegan Freaks radio. And you wouldn't have been able to do that in the not-too-distant past. Your views would have been suppressed by the large organizations the way my views have. And what's really interesting is there's no discussion. There's no discussion. People aren't really willing to confront these issues and sit down – look, if somebody thinks I'm wrong, tell me how it is I'm wrong. I'm more than happy to debate these things. Obviously I have a limited amount of time, I have a lot of things to do, so I can't debate it with everybody, but I tried to debate it with Singer, he wasn't interested (or he wouldn't do it). And I'm happy to debate with folks who have something to say.

The problem is is that a lot of animal people don't believe in debat or discussion. The moment you disagree with anything that PETA says or anything that Wayne Pacelle says or anything that one of the other icons says, then you are an enemy of the people, and you're harming animals –

or whatever loony things these people say. And I just want to say that to the extent that that's what we've become, then we really are a cult. Because that's what cults do. Cults basically say "Here's the orthodoxy. And you aren't permitted to depart from it. You depart from it and you have sinned." And that's what the animal thing, or large parts of it at least, have become. I think it's one of the reasons why Vegan Freaks has grown the way it's grown, is because most of the people who are involved with your forums and listen to your podcasts and stuff are people who are sort of outside of that. And they are alienated and they're not interested in the sort of cult aspects of it and so they turn to alternative sources like you.

But the problem is is that the movement – again, using it loosely – has become a cult. And it's also got this sort of big business sort of feel to it too because we're talking about millions and millions and millions and millions of dollars. Some of these organizations, like HSUS has... I looked recently, it was just extraordinary, I think it was over 200 million dollars in its reserve. We're talking about a big business here. And so, the animal thing unfortunately has become part big business and part cult. And as long as it's that it's never going to go anywhere. As long as it's that, it's never going to shift the paradigm. As long as it's that it's never going to anything to reduce animal use or in any significant way reduce animal suffering – again I want to make it clear that would not solve the moral problem, the problem is use, the problem is not treatment, treatment is *a* problem, it is not the defining problem as I see it – the problem is use. But we're never going to see any changes as long as it's a business cult. And that's the problem. The problem is those who disagree are unwilling to discuss it. And I think until we sit down and start talking about these things, then there's no chance of coming to any common ground because people don't talk. Anybody who disagrees is just discounted – I understand why because, in a sense, promoting veganism... I thought it was interesting, some months ago Dan Matthews of PETA was interviewed by somebody. And he said that about half of the members of PETA were vegetarian. He didn't even say vegan. He said about half of them were vegetarian.

Bob: About half?

Gary: That's what he said. And I think that was in the Orange County weekly. I have it on one of my blog essays, I link to it. I think Dan said, it was in the Orange County weekly, but that's the right figure, he said about half of our members are vegetarians and the other half think it's a good idea. And that's not an exact quote, but it certainly is very close to an exact quote. And I thought that was curious, I thought that was really interesting. It speaks volumes, because an organization like PETA in a sense can't afford to take an unequivocal – PETA can't afford to take the position that veganism is the moral baseline because...

Bob: They'd be alienating half of their donors.

Gary: Because half of their membership is not even vegetarian, let alone vegan. And I don't even know how many of the vegetarian half that Dan was referring to, are vegan. So in a sense, these organizations almost can't afford to promote veganism in the sort of way that I'm saying that they ought to be promoting it, because they'll lose membership. So if you want your animal corporation to continue to grow and be big and bring in zillions of dollars so that you can fly people all over creation so that they can hobnob with rock stars and go naked rather than wear fur, if you want to make that sort of money, then you have to have a broader appeal. The problem

is the broader appeal ends up losing the message because you end up telling people, the most radical aspect of your message is they ought to go to Kentucky Fried Chicken and eat gassed chicken rather than electrically-stunned chicken. I mean, that's what it's become. The rallying cry has become, 'Let's gas the chickens rather than electrocute them or stun them electrically or whatever'. And that's really sort of sad.

Bob: Wow. That is sad. But this is the thing: your books provide a way out of that. They provide a way forward, they provide a new way of thinking about these issues, the challenges, the standard way of thinking about what the movement gives. And so for those reasons I would encourage everyone to become familiar with your work, and especially with this new book which I think provides a really nice job of kind of summing up a lot of your thought to date, so I think that's one of the best parts about the book. Can you tell people again where to get copies of your book?

Gary: Yeah, you can get it online at any of the online stores, you can get it at bookstores, most of the large books store chains are carrying it. But as I said, Columbia till August 1 has a sale on the hardcover – they will put out a paperback copy at some point. But the copy that's available now is a hardcover copy and they've got a sale on all of their animal titles. They have a number of animal titles over at Columbia University Press and all of their animal titles are on sale at 50% – and there are a number of really fine books – but the one to buy first is *Animals as Persons: Essays on the Abolition of Animal Exploitation*. And you can go to the Columbia University Press site or if you go to Anna and my site, the Abolitionist Approach, which is www.abolitionistapproach.com, then I have as my announcement on my homepage the link where you can go to Columbia University Press and you can get the book for 50%. And so, \$20 these days for a hardcover book is nothing.

Bob: It's a good deal.

Gary: And it's a very good deal in terms of the economics of it. And I tried in the book, Bob and Jenna. I mean, the first chapter is really a statement of my theory, my view that animals have – when I talk about animal rights, I'm talking about the one right not to be property and I explain what the problems there are and why property is a problem. And the other essays try to sort of update some of my earlier work and put it into present context. And then I try to explore things as I mentioned before about the history of the development of the welfare movement and welfarist thinking. I deal with animal experimentation, as I was describing in response to Jenna's question and I talk about ecofeminism and about some of the other issues.

I hope it will be a – I try to make it accessible. I mean, I try to make the book something that anybody who's really interested in engaging the ideas and is willing to put some effort in can understand. I try to make it comprehensible and accessible. And I hope that it will be and I hope that – it's very clear a debate has started. That's the one thing that's absolutely clear. I still use the expression 'animal rights' quite a bit but I almost always use it in conjunction with the concept of abolition, because the problem is that animal rights has become so diluted because everybody who likes animals, irrespective of how much meat they eat and how much leather they wear and how many rodeos they go to, call themselves an animal rights person. And that's in part because the animal organizations have so devalued that conceptual currency by referring to

anything as animal rights. And so, I want to make it clear that when I talk about animal rights, I'm talking about abolition of exploitation and that means certain things. And I explain why I think abolition, why an abolitionist is committed to certain moral ideas and, most importantly, veganism. And I am also very concerned about the drift of at least some segments of the movement towards violence. I am, as I said in one of my – I know I will upset some of your listeners – I am violently opposed to violence, I really do think that the genesis of this idea is this whole concept that we are the continuation of the peace movement. In many ways those of us who are trying to promote veganism, promote abolition of exploitation, really shift the paradigm away from property, what we're trying to do is broaden out what started along time ago as the peace movement. And the problem is violence. The problem is we treat animals like animals. And we also treat humans – once we've defined a group of humans, we animalize them. And we've done that historically. Every group of people that we have done nasty things to, we analogize them to animals and then it becomes alright to do anything we want to do with them because they're animals and we can do what we want to with animals. And this is all related to this notion of violence. And the violence that we do to non-humans and the violence that we do to humans. And so I really do think that we need to rethink we're going and what this is about. I also find it disturbing that you have some of the people who support violence –

Bob: They're not even vegans!

Gary: They're not even vegans and they're busy lecturing the rest of us about why violence is necessary, I just find that absurd and beyond belief. And it's a topic that I touch on in the book and it's a topic I'm exploring more now in some of the writing I'm doing now that the concept of 'ahimsa' or non-violence is really essential, as I see it, to this whole enterprise. And so I really hope that I can trigger discussion amongst the non-cult members, those who haven't yet drunk the kool-aid and who are still capable of some critical thinking and who are interested in some critical thinking. And I wish you'd re-extend the offer to Peter Singer, and let's debate the origins of animal welfare and let's talk about animal welfare and let's talk about Bentham and Mill and let's talk about Singer's views about the lack of interest in life that animals, or at least some animals have and talk about those things.

Bob: It'd be a lot of fun. But the last time I tried, he wasn't very into it. I'll try again though.

Gary: Try again!

Bob: I would love to have Peter here –

Jenna: But you're going to have your own show too, so –

Gary: I know, but it's going to take a while. I'm going to try my best and Anna and I are really sort of excited about this but it's going to be a while before we get to the level that Vegan Freaks –

Bob: Oh I doubt it.

Gary: – has gotten to. But I think it would be great to debate Singer and at least if we did it on Vegan Freak it wouldn't be our forum it would be someone else's. Someone else's playground for us to deal with. So please, ask Peter again, if he wants to do it I think it would be a fun thing to do.

Bob: Cool. Well, Gary, thank you so much for being on the show.

Gary: Thank you both very, very much and hi to everybody in Vegan Freak Land and I hope you're all doing well and I hope you're all getting the veganism as of yesterday and staying with it because it's the most important form of political activism in which we can engage.

Bob: Well, there you go. No better note to end on than that one.

Gary: Thank you both very much.

Jenna: Yes, thank you, Gary.